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SPEECH


OF

HON. M. J. CRAWFORD, OF GEORGIA,

ON THE

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 15, 1832.



Mr. CLERK: I had hoped I should never again feel it may duty to say a word in this Hall upon the subject of slavery, but, sir, I am satisfied I would not only do injustice to my own feelings, but also to those of the people I represent, if upon this occasion I should not give utterance to the opinions and the well-settled convictions they entertain in reference to the subject of their condition in the Federal Union. We have endeavored for several days to organize this House by the election of a presiding officer, and have as yet wholly failed in accomplishing that result. Why is it? There is not a man throughout the entire country who does not understand fully that the subject of slavery as it exists in the southern States is the only reason why we cannot organize. The honorable gentleman who has been proposed by the Republican side, is personally unexceptionable as a presiding officer, so far as I know. But he is the representative of a great idea in this country; he is the representative of the anti-slavery sentiment of the entire North, and he is presented to us as the proper representative of this Republican party. As such I view him; as such we have decided to vote against his election; and as such we shall hold him up to the country as the exponent of Republican principles. The subject of slavery has been a disturbing element in American politics for forty years, and it is just as certain to destroy this Union as that time shall last. To talk of the *settlement* of this slavery question is folly; to talk of a compromise upon this subject of slavery is worse than folly; it is *madness*, and cannot be done. The Republican party, which represents almost entirely the whole North, look upon slavery as a sin against God, and a sin against man. We of the South, look upon it as right and proper in itself and in accordance with the Divine teaching. I ask you how, therefore, it is possible for us to compromise the matter? It has been compromised time and again. It has been settled, as it was said by its friends and opponents, more than half a dozen times during the period in which it has occupied public attention, and yet anti-slavery sentiments were never so strong and so powerful as they are to-day. And, on the contrary, I may say that the pro-slavery sentiment of my section of the country was never more powerful in the breasts of our people than it is to-day. Sir, this question has resolved itself at last into a question of slavery and disunion, or no slavey and union. My position is taken; that of my constituents is taken. The position of the North is taken, and there is no mistaking that position.

It has been said, Mr. Clerk, that in reference to this subject of slavery, the the South has committed aggressions against the North. It has been said that

we have violated sacred compacts. Before touching on that subject, I will say to the House that the South has not violated the rights of the North by the tariffs that have been passed for its benefit from the foundation of the Government till now. The South has not aggressed on the North on the subject of bounties on fish that have been secured to your people. The South has not aggressed on the North on the subject of the navigation laws; nor has it aggressed on you on the subject of slavery.

This brings me to the remark of the gentleman representing the Chester district of Pennsylvania, to which I propose now to direct my attention. That gentleman (Mr. HICKMAN) says in his speech :

"Now here is the first, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth compromises which the North have entered into with the South upon this all-absorbing subject of slavery; and the North charges upon the South that in every single instance of compromise they have violated them after having received the benefit, or tried to receive the benefit arising from their side of the bargain."

On this, Mr. Clerk, I take issue with the gentleman from Pennsylvania, and I say that, in regard to the territorial policy of the Government for the first thirty years from its organization, there was no aggression even on the part of our northern brethren; and although this has been shown time and again, and although it has been thundered in your ears for the last fifteen years, it has been either steadily withheld from your people or you have refused to acknowledge the fact on the floor of the House or before your countrymen when at home. Now, gentlemen, I ask your attention to the territorial policy from the foundation of your Government up to 1820. There was no effort on the part of the government, in the organization of the Territories, to extend the Wilnot proviso—or freedom, in your language—to them. In the very first Congress that ever assembled under your present Constitution, a territorial government was organized for Tennessee, and in that territorial bill, so far from southern men being excluded from the enjoyment of that Territory with their property, provision was expressly made for American citizens to enter and enjoy that Territory with their property.

In 1798, in the Fifth Congress, a territorial government was proposed and established for Mississippi; and in that act, too, the rights of slaveholders were expressly reserved. In 1804, the Orleans Territory was organized; in 1805, Louisiana; in 1812, the Territory of Missouri; in 1817, that of Alabama; and in 1819, that of Arkansas. And yet, in every one of these territorial acts, from 1789 down to 1820, there was no exclusion of the slaveholder with his property. And still, it has been reiterated on this floor—you have said it to your constituents at home, and your papers have been filled with it—that the history of this Government establishes the fact that its early fathers were in favor of the exclusion of slavery from the public territory. You have endeavored, by your speeches, to establish the fact that the importation of negroes from foreign countries, instead of from the slave States themselves, was that which was prohibited. Your Government had prohibited the foreign slave-trade after some of these Territories had been organized, and they would not permit persons entering into the Territories to carry slaves there from foreign countries; but they could, by express permission, carry slaves there from the States. It was in 1820 that the first aggression was committed, either on the part of the South or of the North. It was then the slavery question came up; and it was said that there was a compromise then, and that we had violated that compromise. The gentleman from the Chester district (Mr. HICKMAN) said so the other day. I desire to tell that gentleman—although it may not reach his constituents—that his assertions on this floor were not sustained by the truth of history; and I ask him to tell this House what he means by the Missouri compromise!

Mr. HICKMAN. I meant to say, and I thought I did say, that by the compromise entered into in 1820, slavery was excluded from all the territory north of the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$. It was not to go there, from thenceforward, forever. That was the compromise I referred to as having been entered into for the purpose of getting Missouri, as a State, into the Union.

Mr. CRAWFORD. So I understand the gentleman.

Mr. HICKMAN. I wish to say a word further. I will not take up any of the gentleman's time, for the state of my health this morning will not permit me to do so. I desire to say, that the benefits arising from that compromise to freedom were destroyed by the subsequent legislation of 1850 and 1854.

Mr. CRAWFORD. I had expected so much from the gentleman. I knew that he was wholly uninformed in regard to that question, and I knew that his people were uninformed in regard to it. After thirty years of uninterrupted enjoyment of slave property in all the Territories, and by the special provisions of congressional acts, Missouri came forward in 1820, and asked permission to frame a constitution and form a State government. And upon her application the House of Representatives consented that she might form a State government, upon the special condition that slavery was to be forever prohibited therein.

That was the first aggression. Where did it come from? Did it come from southern Representatives, or from northern Representatives? That was the first time when such a condition was ever sought to be imposed upon a people in forming a constitution and State government. Call you that aggression upon the part of the South? No, sir; it came from your section of the Union, where aggressions have been kept up against us from that hour until now. The bill passed the House prohibiting slavery from existing in Missouri. It was carried to the Senate—and what fate did it meet there? A proposition was made there to strike out that clause of the bill which the anti-slavery men of the House inserted, and to add what is known as the eighth section of the Missouri bill, which provided that Missouri might enjoy the right of forming a constitution and State government, on the condition that slavery should be excluded from all the territory north of $36^{\circ} 30'$, and outside of the State of Missouri. That was your "compromise?" Now, how many of your men voted for that "compromise"—that "compact," which the gentleman from Pennsylvania held to be sacred, and which he says we violated? Upon the proposition to add that eighth section, I tell gentlemen that every northern Senator except two voted to place this limit upon the right of a sovereign State to come into this Union; and yet, after they had put that provision into the bill; upon a test question; upon ordering the bill to be engrossed and read a third time, every northern Senator but four voted against it! Did they stand by the "compromise?" I ask you, gentlemen of the Republican party—you who go home to your people and tell them that we have violated the Missouri compromise—I ask you if it is not true that the very Senators who put the Missouri compromise in the bill of 1820, turned round immediately afterwards, and, upon a test question, voted against it? And, sir, I tell the gentleman from Pennsylvania that Missouri was not admitted under that act. That act was passed in March, 1820; and in December of the same year, Missouri, having formed her constitution and State government, came to Congress and asked admission as one of the sister States of this Confederacy. Did you stand by the compromise and admit her? You say it was a compromise. Did you stand by it? The Senate passed a resolution admitting her. She came to this House and sought admission. You who stand so faithfully by compacts, and complain of the South for not standing by them, did you admit her? Why, Mr. Clerk, when the resolution of the Senate came to this House, two-thirds of these compact-observing gentlemen voted

against the admission of Missouri; and that was in the December following the adoption of this very compromise, which they say they have so faithfully kept! That is the history of the matter; and Missouri was not admitted under the act of 1820 at all, but under the proclamation of the President under a very different one. Why did you object to her admission? *Because slavery existed there*; and let me tell you, that slavery had existed in Missouri for sixteen years under our French purchase, and had a positive existence for eight years under her territorial government, when she made her application for admission into the Union. And this is the sacred compact which gentlemen say we have violated!

But, Mr. Clerk, this compromise of 1820 was expected to *settle* the slavery question, and give *peace* to the country; there was to be no more disturbance about it ever after. How long was it thereafter before this House and the country were disturbed by petitions from the North asking the abolition of slavery in this District? Peace to the country, did I say! I say that there was no peace upon this slavery question—there never will, and never can, be peace upon it. This House and the other end of the Capitol were flooded with petitions in reference to the subject of slavery in this District! Did we have peace? But at last the South yielded to the everlasting importunities of these anti-slavery men, and repealed the 21st rule, which prohibited the reception of such petitions. And *then* we were to have peace beyond question. Have we had it? Look to the annexation of Texas. Look to the growth of the anti-slavery sentiment in your section when Texas was annexed. When the Mexican acquisition came, or before it came, Mr. Polk asked for \$3,000,000 to negotiate a peace with Mexico. This anti-slavery sentiment manifested itself then, and almost the entire North, in the House of Representatives, said that whatever of territory should be acquired from Mexico, slavery should not exist therein. These sacred compact-men knew that most of this territory would be *south* of the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$, and why did they not then stand by the compromise? Why did they not stand by it in 1848, when a select committee was appointed to settle matters of difference between them and us? How did the vote stand then? It was proposed by the southern men composing the Clayton compromise committee, and rejected by the northern men. We tendered it to you, in 1850, over and over again. You have never been willing to take the Missouri compromise unless it worked in your favor, and the territory lay north of the line.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania talks of the aggressions on the part of the South, in 1850. Did we aggress upon you when we acquired this territory from Mexico? Did we aggress upon you then? Who got California, with its interminable gold fields, with its thousand miles of sea-coast front, extending above and below the Missouri compromise line? I ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania if, entering upon Texas, a slave State—where pro-slavery laws existed in 1850—and setting apart forty-four thousand square miles of her territory to New Mexico, where there were no such laws, was that an aggression on the part of the South? It was not aggression in the case of California; it was not aggression upon this Texas boundary question. Where, then, did we aggress upon you? It was not in the law abolishing slavery in this District. Congress exercised the right to abolish slavery in the District. I care not what reason you may have assigned for it, a man who brings a slave here with a view to sell him or send him South and sell him, forfeits him, and he is free by law. Congress so declared in 1850; and if you can exercise the power for one reason, you may for any or none. The reason with which a man brings a slave into the District of Columbia, neither increases nor diminishes our power over the subject of slavery. Did we aggress upon your rights then?

I felt, Mr. Clerk, that then was the time for the South to have settled forever

this question of slavery with our northern *brethren*. I, in common with many other patriotic men of my State, endeavored to dissolve the ties which bound us to this Union. We appealed from the action of the Government to the people themselves. I told them then that there would never be any peace in this Republic. I knew it then, and I know it now. There is no peace. The people, after looking into the question, after considering it, after weighing it thoroughly, determined to acquiesce in the compromise of 1850. From that hour, Mr. Clerk, until the present, I have stood with my arms folded, looking for the time when the question should be presented by our northern *brethren* as it has been for the last three months—ready, sir, at a moment's warning, to strike for the liberties of the people I represent. I now tell you that my people, those who felt in 1850 that the Republic could be preserved longer, believe that it cannot now be preserved.

But, Mr. Clerk, to proceed with my argument. In 1852, all parties seemed to acquiesce in the compromise of 1850. The North said that they were satisfactory. The Democratic party said that they would abide by and adhere to them. The Whig party said that they were satisfactory. They were to be a *finality*—a *final* settlement of all the differences that divided the people of the North from the people of the South. How long did your compromise of 1850 last? For only two years—from 1852 to 1854. And, sir, when the principle of those compromises was attempted to be incorporated into the Kansas-Nebraska bill, this House remembers, the country remembers, the blaze of excitement which was seen throughout the entire North. That settlement, for a time, had smothered the anti-slavery sentiment in the North; but, in 1854, it broke out with renewed force—with more, indeed, than it ever had before. Why? Simply because the slaveholder of the South was offered the poor privilege of settling the Territory of Kansas upon an equality with a man from the North. The restriction, which for thirty-four years had driven us from that territory, had been torn from the statute-book. The men of the South stood once more forth the equal of the men of the North.

It was only our contending for this privilege and this right, which the South was entitled to enjoy in the Territory of Kansas, which roused the North into a flame of excitement against us. It built up this powerful organization which now controls the entire North, and in 1856 nominated an adventurer, a man unknown to political fame, a man who had no antecedents which would justify his election, for President of the United States, and came very nearly electing him. In fact, the opponents of slavery and the haters of slaveholders, in the North, polled for that man thirteen hundred and thirty-six thousand votes, a larger vote than that which Mr. Buchanan got in the North. You control the entire North; you control all northern legislation, and you strike down the Democratic party of the North. Here, upon our side of the House, the few Democratic Representatives from the North who have stood by the Constitution, and have been prepared to defend the rights of the South, have one by one been swept away before this northern fanaticism. They have stood up and battled for us—not for slavery, but for the Constitution of their country. I honor them for it; I am proud of northern Democrats who have stood by the Constitution of their country, and they deserve the thanks of our people. But I tell them they are powerless to meet this great Republican horde, which comes like an avalanche from the North, and drives everything before it. They have the control of the North, and you are weak, you are no longer able to save yourselves, or the Constitution. We must look to our own people and our own section for protection. We can no longer rely upon men of the North to help us in this our hour of danger. I would that we could do it, but it is impossible.

Next comes another event in this great drama of anti-slavery. A southern traitor, a poor, miserable wretch, who had been driven from the town of his na-

tivity, seeks refuge among these sacred observers of compacts, and publishes a book, in which he calls upon the non-slaveholders of the South to put down slavery by violence and blood. We have no fear for slavery; it is an institution which, in its relation between master and slave, cannot be disturbed by all the men in the northern States. The book which makes this proposition to a class of our safest and best men in the South finds sixty-eight indorsers among the representative men of this body in the last Congress. Yes, sir, sixty-eight men of the last House of Representatives recommended the circulation of a book which urges the slaves of the South to sacrifice the lives of their owners, and your candidate for Speaker among them. The great leader of that party, Mr. SEWARD, said he had *read the book*; that it was full of merit, and recommended it to the people of all the States. Hear what he says:

"I have read 'The Impending Crisis of the South' with deep attention. It seems to me a work of great merit, rich, yet accurate, in statistical information, and logical in analysis."

Such is the language of WILLIAM H. SEWARD. This book is indorsed by your leading men, and yet you are our *brethren*, and love us devotedly, and anxiously desire to preserve our rights under the Constitution of the United States. We were told by the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. CORWIN,) the other day, in an amusing and interesting speech, that we should look upon this question calmly. I know it is the purpose of the Republicans who signed that circular to make the country believe that this is a trivial affair. And why? Because they know that they will be held to a strict accountability by those Democrats who stand behind them at home. You say we should not be alarmed; that we ought not to pay any attention to it.

Let us pursue the history of this question a little further, and see. You make sport of the Brown invasion, and tell us not to be alarmed. But why was it that that insurrection did not extend? We are not indebted to the northern Black Republicans for it, *but to the fidelity of the slave population of Virginia, and to that alone*. Brown expected, and had reason to expect, help from your people of the North, but he was deceived. They had the will, but they had not the courage of John Brown. (Applause in the galleries.) I tell you now, that the South is once more aroused. She understands that this question cannot be settled; she knows it cannot be. She sees the condition of the public mind at the North; understands, and appreciates it. She understands that there are some men at the North who are now afraid that these *southern colonies* of theirs will break loose and set up a government by themselves, to get rid of this everlasting disturbance upon slavery. Hence it is, we see that they are gathering all over the North, in Union meetings, to express their sympathy for us. We ask from the North no such sympathy. We are able to take care of ourselves. We are independent of you. I tell you what the South wants. She wants the North to send Representatives different from those now here and in the other wing of the Capitol. That we shall never get; and we know it. We understand this question too well not to know that the North never intends to change her position in that respect. When we see that the North proposes to repeal her personal liberty bills, and her acts of *habeas corpus*; when she throws open her jails for the security of our fugitive slaves; when we can travel through the northern States as brethren, and you can travel South without attempting to excite insurrection; when our rights in the Territories are respected, then, and not till then, will the South be satisfied. But until then, your Union meetings amount to nothing. Give us these things, and then we will begin to listen to what you have to say.

Hear what a distinguished Senator says in regard to the Union meetings at the North:

"Union-saving meetings are of no earthly significance. He had nothing to say against those political enuchs who gather around such meetings; but those meetings did not weigh a feather's weight in Massachusetts. Boston had gone for the Republicans at the recent election, and the Union-saving meeting held there was enough to produce such a result. Notwithstanding these threats on the floor of the Senate, the people of Massachusetts would give fifty thousand majority for whoever shall be nominated as the Republican candidate for President."

Hear what else was said in one of these Union meetings at the North. Mr. Cushing says:

"All the political influences dominant in this State were founded upon the single emotion of hate—ay, hate, treacherous, ferocious, fiendish hate, of our fellow-citizens in the southern States."

Mr. GOOCH. If Mr. Cushing used such language he stated what every other man in Massachusetts knew to be false.

Mr. CRAWFORD. In reply to that, I desire to say that when Mr. Cushing expressed that sentiment, there was applause and cries of "Good!" "Good!" in Faneuil Hall. Now, what is our duty? We understand you, and we think the South understands you. You have got a majority in every northern State. The free States have a majority of fifty-seven on this floor, and a majority of six in the other branch of the Capitol, a majority of sixty-three in the Electoral college, and a majority in every branch of the Government. And what do you propose? First, an instantaneous repeal of the fugitive slave law. That is the doctrine of your leading men. Next, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Next, the abolition of the slave-trade between the States. But the most important question of the party is the suppression of slavery in the Territories, by a positive law, and to put this Government permanently on the side of freedom, as you call it. I am reminded, too, that you propose to reorganize the Supreme Court. That is what you propose to do.

I want the question tested between you and us. I want it settled. I want to know whether we are to be controlled, whether we are to be limited to where slavery now exists, or whether we are to have liberty to go beyond. We have now four millions of slaves. In some twenty-five years hence we will have eight millions. We demand expansion. *We will have expansion*, in spite of the Republican party, and all the Abolitionists of the Old and New World. (Applause from the Democratic benches and the galleries.) You say that you would not menace slavery in the States where it exists, but would put the Government permanently on the side of freedom, denationalize slavery, and then let us hug it to our bosoms until it destroys us; and that if we but touch the hem of the mantle of freedom, you will trample us to the earth. That is the expression of a leading northern statesman. Beecher said that he would preach the same doctrines in Virginia as in Massachusetts. Brown says: "Beecher, why don't you come and do it?" I ask you why you do not come on?

Mr. KILGORE. I will answer the gentleman if he permits me. I will tell the gentleman why Mr. Beecher would not preach in Virginia: Because liberty of speech is denied in the South; and if he were to go there he would get a coat of tar and feathers.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes, sir; and not only would he be denied liberty of speech, but he would be denied personal liberty also, and would be hung higher than Haman,

Mr. KILGORE. Certainly he would.

Mr. CRAWFORD. That would be the end of him. All we want you to do is, that you shall not back down from your flag unless you intend, in good faith, to give us peace. Stand by it; do not slink away from it. Stand by your true



colors. Do not deceive your people by telling them that you intend to do justice to the South when you have no idea of it.

Now, in regard to the election of a Black Republican President I have this to say, and I speak the sentiment of every Democrat on this floor from the State of Georgia: we will never submit to the inauguration of a Black Republican President. (Applause from the Democratic benches, and hisses from the Republicans.) I repeat it, sir; and I have authority to say so; that no Democratic Representative from Georgia on this floor will ever submit to the inauguration of a Black Republican President. (Renewed applause and hisses.)

Mr. KILGORE. Will the gentleman tell me how he will prevent it?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Sir, that will be for ourselves to determine; and we do not propose to give our enemies the benefit of the information. Now I speak for myself, and not for the delegation. We have endeavored for forty years to settle this question between the North and the South, and find it impossible. I, therefore, am without hope in the Union, so are hundreds of thousands of my countrymen at home. The most confiding of them all are, sir, for "equality in the Union or independence out of it;" having lost all hope of the former, I am for "INDEPENDENCE NOW, AND INDEPENDENCE FOREVER."